Strategies to Improve Poll-Worker Performance

To establish assignments and support techniques, project managers need to know:

- The expected number of voters in each polling place.
- The skills and knowledge of each poll worker.
- The number and types of voting equipment at each site.

The following section provides tools and processes that can boost poll-worker management. These tools can reduce the administrative burden on Election Day. These measures include Election Day troubleshooters, early voting sites, and the development and assignment of blended poll-worker teams.

Election Day Troubleshooters

In This Chapter:

- **Types of Troubleshooters**
- **Recruitment and Training of Troubleshooters**
- **Troubleshooter Evaluation Programs**

Election Day troubleshooting programs come in all shapes and sizes, but the objective remains the same: to provide a back-up support system for poll workers. These tools can reduce the burden for those on the job, minimize the chance for error, and build the confidence of the poll workers themselves. This approach often takes the form of well-trained, well-equipped troubleshooters.

Troubleshooters can prevent Election Day meltdown. They serve as liaisons between the polling places in the field and election central. On Election Day, troubleshooters become the eyes and ears of the chief election official. They provide feedback, and are often involved in post-election debriefing.

Types of Troubleshooters

- Rovers usually visit and monitor several polling places throughout the day. Some carry extra or replacement supplies. Some contact the leader of a poll-worker team to ensure that everything is set up correctly — voting machines are operational and poll workers are on duty. Often using a checklist, troubleshooters audit polling places, and to assure election central that all comply with procedures and processes.

- Reservists, or reserve poll workers, and they are on standby to fill vacancies on poll-worker teams.

- Technicians concentrate on the election machinery and receive extra training on voting machines. They can serve as rovers, or they can serve several precincts by helping to open and close machines, and fix and operate other pieces of equipment, including printers, electronic poll books and modems. Some jurisdictions assign one technician to each polling place.

- Openers and Closers handle the biggest Election-Day challenges: setup, opening and closing polling places, and their machinery. In some jurisdictions, they only get places up and running on the morning of the election. Then they return to the polls to help close and get returns to the election office.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Troubleshooters are usually paid more than poll workers, which may increase the budget.
- As other poll workers learn about the higher pay, they might ask to be promoted. Election officials should screen and test so the best poll workers receive this opportunity.

Tips for Successful Implementation

- Aassign the same set of polling places to the same troubleshooter for each election. The troubleshooter will become familiar with each polling place and develop a driving route. Based on data provided by election central, the troubleshooter plots a route based on which sites might need the most assistance. A new Precinct Leader might be at one site. At another, a large voter turnout is projected. Another might have a large number of voting machines.
- Assign troubleshooters to polling places with new programs or equipment.
- Troubleshooters could attend regular poll-worker training as well as specialized technical training. They can work more effectively and avoid mistakes if they have a basic understanding of polling place operations.

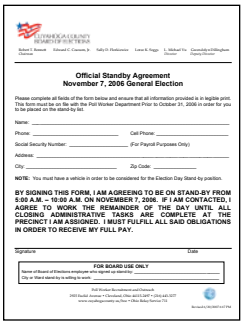
Evaluation: Questions to Ask

- Is the program sustainable? Do you have the budget to create a troubleshooter program or the ability to move funds to sustain it? Will your staff have time for this extra recruiting effort?
- Is it measurable? Can you track how many troubleshooters you hire each election? Can you track how many return for the next election? Are they serving as your Election Day eyes and ears in the field? Are troubleshooters effectively solving problems?
- Is the program worthwhile elsewhere? Did you hear about this program from another jurisdiction and adapt it? Is it worth writing about and sharing with other jurisdictions?

Section 5: #51: Stand-by agreement letter, Cuyahoga Co, OH

Section 5: #52: Stand-by appointment letter, Cuyahoga Co, OH

Section 5: #53: Rover Polling Place Checklist



Official Standby Agreement
November 7, 2006 General Election

Please complete all fields of the form below and ensure that all information provided is in legible print. This form must be on file with the Poll Worker Department Prior to October 31, 2006 in order for you to be placed on the stand-by list.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Social Security Number: _____ (For Payroll Purposes Only)

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

NOTE: You must have a vehicle in order to be considered for the Election Day Stand-by position.

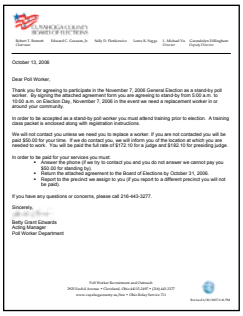
BY SIGNING THIS FORM, I AM AGREEING TO BE ON STAND-BY FROM 5:00 A.M. – 10:00 A.M. ON NOVEMBER 7, 2006. IF I AM CONTACTED, I AGREE TO WORK THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY UNTIL ALL CLOSING ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS ARE COMPLETE AT THE PRECINCT I AM ASSIGNED. I MUST FULFILL ALL SAID OBLIGATIONS IN ORDER TO RECEIVE MY FULL PAY.

Signature _____ Date _____

FOR BOARD USE ONLY

Name of Board of Elections employee who signed up attendee: _____

City or Ward stand-by is willing to work: _____



October 13, 2006

Dear Poll Worker,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the November 7, 2006 General Election as a stand-by poll worker. By signing the attached agreement form you are agreeing to stand-by from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Election Day, November 7, 2006 in the event we need a replacement worker in or around your community.

In order to be accepted as a stand-by poll worker you must attend training prior to election. A training class packet is enclosed along with registration instructions.

We will not contact you unless we need you to replace a worker. If you are not contacted you will be paid $50.00 for your time. If we do contact you, we will inform you of the location at which you are needed to work. You will be paid the full rate of $172.10 for a judge and $162.10 for presiding judge.

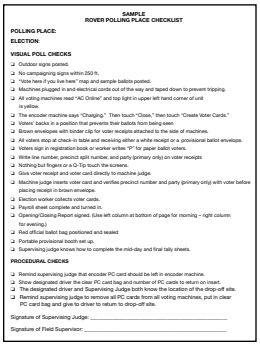
In order to be paid for your services you must:

- Answer the phone (if we try to contact you and you do not answer we cannot pay you $50.00 for standing by).
- Complete the attached agreement to the Board of Elections by October 31, 2006.
- Report to the precinct we assign to you (if you report to a different precinct you will not be paid).

If you have any questions or concerns, please call 216-443-3277.

Sincerely,

Betty Grant Edwards
Kelly Ichenlaub
Poll Worker Department



SAMPLE
ROVER POLLING PLACE CHECKLIST

POLLING PLACE:

ELECTION:

VISUAL POLL CHECKS

- ❑ Outdoor signs posted.
- ❑ No campaigning signs within 250 ft.
- ❑ "Vote here if you live here" map and sample ballots posted.
- ❑ Machines plugged in and electrical cords out of the way and taped down to prevent tripping.
- ❑ All voting machines read "AC Online" and top light in upper left hand corner of unit is yellow.
- ❑ The encoder machine says "Charging." Then touch "Close," then touch "Create Voter Cards."
- ❑ Voters' backs in a position that prevents their ballots from being seen
- ❑ Brown envelopes with binder clip for voter receipts attached to the side of machines.
- ❑ All voters stop at check-in table and receiving either a white receipt or a provisional ballot envelope.
- ❑ Voters sign in registration book or worker writes "P" for paper ballot voters.
- ❑ Write line number, precinct split number, and party (primary only) on voter receipts
- ❑ Nothing but fingers or a Q-Tip touch the screens.
- ❑ Give voter receipt and voter card directly to machine judge.
- ❑ Machine judge inserts voter card and verifies precinct number and party (primary only) with voter before placing receipt in brown envelope.
- ❑ Election worker collects voter cards.
- ❑ Payroll sheet complete and turned in.
- ❑ Opening/Closing Report signed. (Use left column at bottom of page for morning – right column for evening.)
- ❑ Red official ballot bag positioned and sealed
- ❑ Portable provisional booth set up.
- ❑ Supervising judge knows how to complete the mid-day and final tally sheets.

PROCEDURAL CHECKS

- ❑ Remind supervising judge that encoder PC card should be left in encoder machine.
- ❑ Show designated driver the clear PC card bag and number of PC cards to return on insert.
- ❑ The designated driver and Supervising Judge both know the location of the drop-off site.
- ❑ Remind supervising judge to remove all PC cards from all voting machines, put in clear PC card bag and give to driver to return to drop-off site.

Signature of Supervising Judge: _____

Signature of Field Supervisor: _____

Early Voting and Vote Centers

In This Chapter:

- **How early voting sites, consolidated polling places and vote centers differ from Election-Day poll sites**
- **Tips for successful implementation**

Early voting sites, consolidated polling places and vote centers are becoming increasingly popular. They add convenience for voters, and they make Election Day administration easier by reducing the number of polling places and poll workers.

In Clark County in Nevada, which includes Las Vegas, half of the voters cast their ballots early in 2004 elections. Fewer polling places and poll workers were needed on Election Day.

Early Voting: In jurisdictions that allow early voting, voters can come to the central election office or to satellite sites before Election Day. Typically, early voting begins one to two weeks before Election Day. Voters should be able to resolve registration problems that might have prevented them from casting a vote on Election Day. Early voting and vote centers require both access to the list of registered voters and the ability to provide every ballot style.

Consolidated Polling Places: Computerized voting and electronic poll books now provide the opportunity to assign several precincts to the same polling place. All voters check in at a central station, where they are listed by name instead of their precinct.

Vote Centers: This is the next step beyond consolidated polling places. They replace neighborhood polling places with "super polling places" throughout the jurisdiction. Voters can go to any vote center to cast their ballot. In Larimer County, Colorado, 31 vote centers replaced 143 polling sites. Instead of 1,000 poll workers, the county needed only 500 to staff the vote centers.

Vote centers usually work best in jurisdictions where significant numbers of people vote absentee or before Election Day.

Since fewer poll workers are needed to staff early-voting sites, consolidated polling places and vote centers, more selective recruitment and screening standards can be deployed. In addition, with hours of operation extending over several days or even weeks, there may be an added incentive for potential

recruits: more salary and regular blocs of part-time work throughout the year.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Recruiting employees to staff early voting sites will require a separate recruitment effort, with different materials and application process. These poll workers may also need more skills, such as operating a desktop computer or typing.
- Staffing early-voting sites will require more comprehensive training.
- Early voting sites may be subject to different personnel and minimum-wage regulations.

Tips for Successful Implementation

- *Pilot these programs in small elections prior to a general election.*
- *Develop a separate training program for early voting, consolidated polling places and vote center operations.*

Election jurisdictions should consider beginning their recruitment process by reviewing and interviewing their best Election Day poll workers.

Blended Poll Worker Teams

In This Chapter:

- **Description of blended poll worker teams**
- **Developing a blended team tracking system**
- **Screening poll workers for blended teams**

The business of managing poll workers is changing. New federal and state election procedures -- provisional ballots, early voting, voter identification -- have increased the demands on poll workers. So has equipment like touch-screen voting machines, precinct optical readers and electronic poll books. As the needs change, procedures for assigning workers to polling places must also change.

Using many of the practices contained in this guidebook, election administrators can expand their range of recruiting, from high school and college students to civic leaders, government employees, bilingual poll workers, retirees, technicians and disabled poll workers. This expansion of the work force provides the opportunity to create teams that are “blended.” Each team includes a variety of people with a mix of skills. The poll-worker teams of the future will work together to meet the changing demands for the conduct of elections.

Benefits

- A blended group of poll workers with a diverse sets of skills and abilities can promote the success of the entire team.

- A diverse team will probably be more representative of voters at each polling site.

Election officials can develop an assignment method that tells them in advance where, how many, and what kinds of poll workers are needed. Administrators can be confident that they are managing polling more efficiently.

The complexity of building blended teams requires a systematic process that can improve record management, payroll and poll-worker assignment.

Developing a Blended Team Tracking System

The following method helps to determine the number of voters expected at each polling place on Election Day.

- Use spreadsheet software like Excel or Access to create a database of precincts.

- In the spreadsheet, include both the number of registered voters and the number of active registered voters in each precinct served by the polling place.

- Subtract any permanent-absentee-by-mail voters.

- Project the voter turnout for the specific election, based on past statistics.

- Project the percentage of voters who will vote absentee or early, and subtract that number from the expected voter turnout.

This formula provides the expected-to-vote number on Election Day at each polling place. Use it to determine the number of poll workers, supplies, ballots and voting machines. Sort the expected-to-vote list from largest to smallest numbers.

- Consistent with your state law, begin by assigning at least one high school or college poll worker to each polling place.

- Next, assign a government or workforce employee to each polling place.

- Using census data and demographics, assign bilingual workers to targeted polling places.

- Assign disabled poll workers to specific polling places based projected voters with developmental disabilities, or hearing or sight-impaired voters.

For example, if your jurisdiction has electronic poll books, you would want at least two poll workers in each polling place who know how to set up and manage the check-in process using the new technology.

- Track your methods for evaluating poll workers and use those tools as part of your assignment process.

- Add a column to track the number of poll workers trained by polling place or precinct.

High-capacity sites need a large number of top-quality poll workers to keep the voter flow moving on Election Day. Polling places expecting small numbers of voters can be staffed by fewer poll workers who have basic skill sets.

Add columns and data to the spreadsheet based on specific needs. Examples include:

- The number of poll workers assigned and trained. (Column A)

- The number of poll workers needed. (Column B)

This information can be updated daily during assignment and training. You can quickly subtract Column A from Column B to find the number of poll workers needed to be recruited or trained. You may want to track supervisors in a separate column – especially if they must attend a more advanced training session.

A spreadsheet facilities assigning troubleshooters to polling places. You can add a code to denote high-traffic locations where supervisors might need extra assistance. You can assign troubleshooters to those sites first during the opening and closing of the polls.

Sample Excel Spreadsheet:

	Polling Place Name	Total Reg	Acres	By Mail Total	Needed to Vote (Reg – By Mail)	Projected Turnout 42% of Reg	Projected Early Vote 30% of Turnout	Expected Polls Turnout minus Early Votes	Check this Table (1)	Total EVMs	Total Voting Machines
1	AMERICAN LEGION	1,017	920	28	989	428	129	299	1	4	3
2	KING BOWLING	1,205	1,085	22	1,183	507	153	354	1	4	4
3	AMCI AT LAKE FARMS	868	709	0	868	365	110	255	1	4	3

Screening Potential Poll Workers for Blended Teams

In a survey of local election officials conducted by NACo in 2006, 18.5 percent of respondents reported using a formal method to screen poll workers before allowing them to serve on Election Day.

In small jurisdictions, screening poll workers might not be necessary. The election official is likely to know the recruits.

According to the nationwide membership survey, six jurisdictions asked recruits to take a literacy test. Eleven jurisdictions ran criminal background checks on potential poll workers, and 67 made recruits fill out questionnaires. Questionnaires can be included in the application form.

Other jurisdictions use less formal methods, such as personal interviews and referrals. Screen potential recruits as you collect and analyze data from the previous election. Such information includes the most common errors, whether training can correct the problems, amended procedures or materials, and whether you can track problems to poll-worker performance and error.

You can also include screening in poll-worker training. Screen formally, by administering a quiz, or informally, with trainers evaluating poll workers' abilities. Trainer evaluations usually work best in small classes with hands-on training.

State-Initiated Poll-Worker Programs

Local election officials usually recruit and train the nation's 1.4 million poll workers, but many states supplement and support the recruitment of high-quality poll workers. A survey of a dozen local and state election officials asked for feedback on the strengths and weaknesses

of state-led and state-initiated poll-worker programs.

State-led programs vary, but they include at least one of the following components:

- They provide a uniform poll-worker curriculum or training materials.
- They work with local officials or universities to develop poll-worker recruiting materials.
- They work with corporations to benefit Corporate PW Programs.
- They conduct poll-worker training and certify high-level poll workers.
- They train and certify local election officials in state laws and procedures.
- Observers from state offices visit polling places and give local officials feedback.

Some states support more flexible laws governing residency requirements for poll workers, and laws permitting high school students to serve as poll workers. For example, a Minnesota law provides that ”any individual who is eligible to vote in this state is qualified to be appointed as an Election Judge.” Municipalities that have difficulty finding poll workers can use ones from other precincts. The law also allows high school students to serve as trainee Election Judges.

Mechanisms used for these programs:

- Recruitment flyers and videos aimed at high school and college students, corporate poll workers and bilingual poll workers.
- Letters to corporate leaders requesting recruitment partnerships.
- Press releases announcing the need for poll workers statewide or in targeted parts of the state.
- Training kits that include videos, training manuals, lesson plans training slides or PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, quizzes, role-plays and certificates of completion.

State election officials interviewed said they were motivated by legislative mandates or requests from local election officials.

Strengths of State-Initiated Programs

- They help recruit high-quality poll workers who have completed high-quality training.
- They foster consistency in the implementation of procedures.
- Many state-sponsored short sessions are effective and convenient.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- In states with a variety of voting systems, state information can be of limited use, and maintaining uniformity can be difficult.
- Local officials must be engaged in developing the state-initiated program.
- One-time state allocations eventually run out.

One state election official said that the biggest challenge was to meet local demand for more classes. Another indicated that the state had not yet devised a program that met with local satisfaction.

Engaging Local Election Officials: Local election administrators cooperate with the Secretary of State's office to develop training. In some states, local officials can tailor materials to local needs.

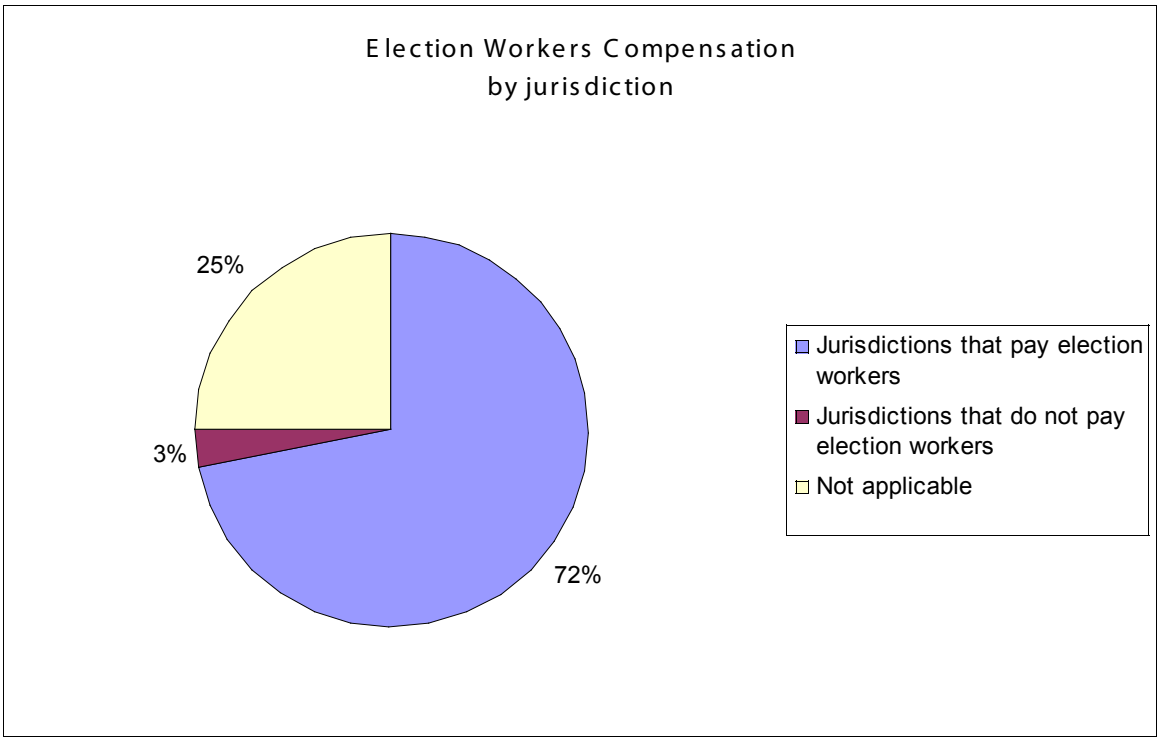
Program Funding

- HAVA funds, especially when adopting new voting systems
- General operating fund
- State appropriations
- County funds

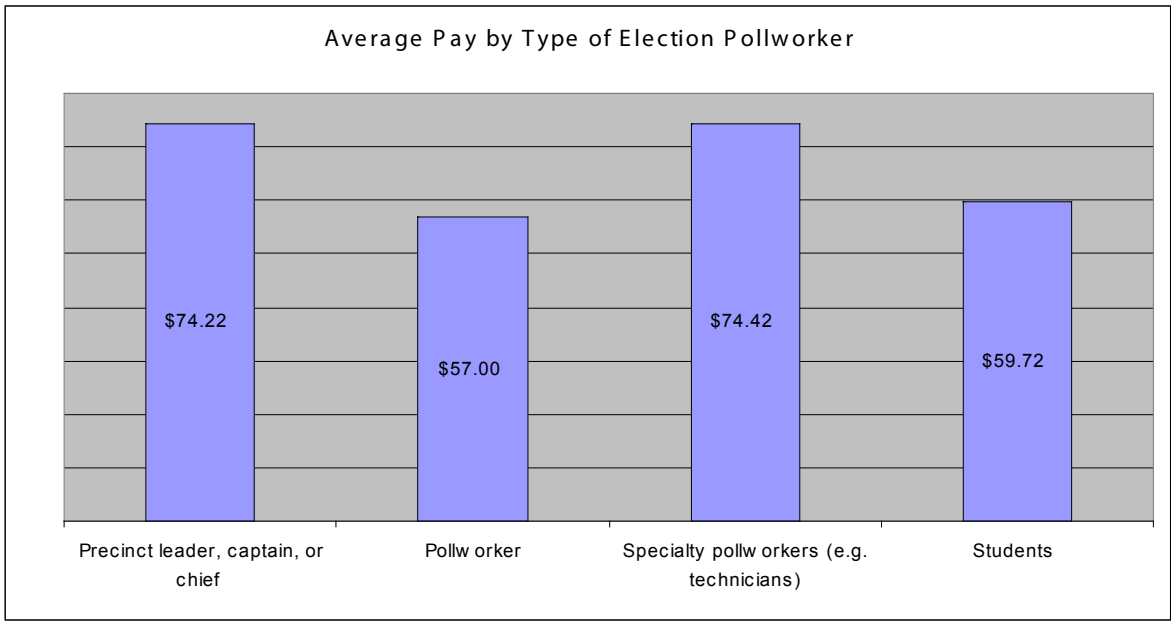
Snapshot of Poll-Worker Pay Scales across the United States

The 2006 NACo survey asked jurisdictions how much they pay poll workers.

72 percent said they pay election workers, 3 percent do not, and 25 percent answered "not applicable."



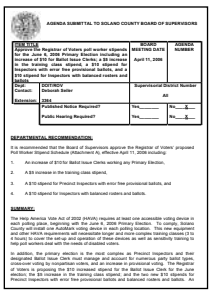
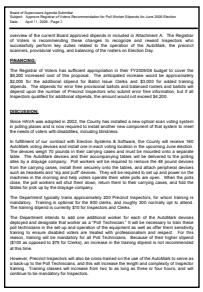
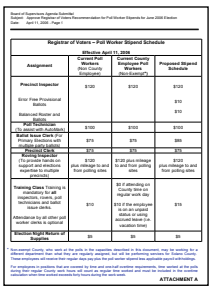
Average Daily Basic Pay Rates	
Precinct leader, captain or chief	$74.22
Poll worker	$57.00
Specialty poll worker	$74.22
Student	$59.72



Additional compensation

Training	56.2 percent
Bilingual ability	1.1
Mileage	51.6
Picking up supplies	28.4
Performance bonus	0.3

Additional payments, including precinct set-up and tear-down, attendance, meetings, cell-phone usage and meals, averaged 10.5 percent.

Section 5: #54: County Board Motion to increase pollworker stipend; Sonoma, CA

Section 5: #55: County Board Motion to increase pollworker stipend, Solano, CA